

# BULLETPROOF FAITH

## Study Guide

A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians  
By: Candace Chellew-Hodge

## **The Fine Print**

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For more information contact us at:

InSpirit Enterprises LLC

PO Box 727

Camden, SC 29021

Email: [candace@bulletproofbook.com](mailto:candace@bulletproofbook.com)

Web Site: <http://www.bulletproofbook.com>

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## About the Author



Candace Chellew-Hodge is a recovering Southern Baptist. Born in 1965 as the grand finale of five children to a Southern Baptist minister and his wife, she comes by her need for recovery honestly.

Chellew-Hodge literally grew up in the church, playing with her G.I. Joe dolls and Tonka trucks in the sanctuary aisles. Her family was still shocked when she came out as a lesbian years later, despite the obvious clues.

She gave up her faith at age 17, about the same time she entered a career in journalism that would span some 25 years, but despite the allegations of some conservative pundits, the media was not to blame for making her Godless for a brief few years. Instead, Chellew-Hodge

fell prey to the trap so many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people find themselves stuck in. She believed the lie that she couldn't be both a lesbian and a Christian.

She returned to the church in her early 20s, kicking and screaming, at the insistence of her first girlfriend. She describes her first service at a Metropolitan Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia as “coming home.”

Chellew-Hodge entered seminary in 1998, a couple of years after she founded *Whosoever: An Online Magazine for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Christians* at <http://www.whosoever.org>. The magazine had drawn the attention of many in opposition to GLBT equality in church and society and Chellew-Hodge sought the tools to answer her critics. What she discovered in seminary was a whole new way to approach the question of homosexuality, gender identity and spirituality and a new way to answer critics that was a lot less stressful. This approach is covered in her first book *Bulletproof Faith: A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians*, published by Jossey-Bass.

Chellew-Hodge graduated from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in 2002 with a Master of Theological Studies degree. She was ordained in 2003 by Gentle Spirit Christian Church in Atlanta, Georgia. In July 2004, she became assistant pastor at Garden of Grace United Church of Christ in Columbia, South Carolina (what was then MCC Columbia). In 2007 she was licensed as a United Church of Christ minister and made associate pastor at Garden of Grace.

Chellew-Hodge lives in Camden, South Carolina, with her partner Wanda, their dogs, Sadie, Loki, Jack, and Bandit and their cats, George and Xena. They are currently enjoying a new sun room and hot tub that they can barely afford.

## 1

## A Letter From Candace Chellew-Hodge

First, let me offer an apology. I'm sorry there is even a need for this book. I would have loved to have written a completely different book. Perhaps a feel-good self-help book, like the ones that have made Wayne Dyer a rich man, or perhaps one that celebrates the awe and wonder of being a follower of Christ - without having to distinguish between those followers based on something inconsequential to God, like their sexual orientation. But, because there is a faction of Christians who insist on making this distinction, there is a need for this book, and for that I'm sorry.

I'm sorry that there are so many Christians in this world who would rather judge and tear down fellow believers instead of build them up. I'm sorry there are so many Christians in this world who would rather exclude than include others in God's grace. I'm sorry there are so many Christians in this world who would rather argue over a few biblical passages of dubious meaning than seek common ground around the law of love that Jesus came to proclaim. I'm sorry for the damage these kinds of Christians have done to the body of Christ - wounding the GLBT believer who seeks find their place in God's realm. I'm sorry that these kinds of Christians have made GLBT people believe that they are hated by God, cursed by God and not faithful enough in their walk to come to God just as they are created.

What I'm most sorry for is that this book has been needed for so long. When I founded my Internet magazine Whosoever back in 1996, there was little out there to affirm GLBT Christians. Daniel Helminiak's *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* had been released a couple of years earlier and remained a best seller in GLBT bookstores. Clearly, our community was hungry for affirmation that God loves us and made us just as we are. It would be nice to say that some 13 years later we wouldn't be as hungry for affirming material, but we are.

*Bulletproof Faith* is a book that is needed by many in our community and even by those outside our community who support us. I believe the atmosphere in both church and society is more inviting and affirming of GLBT people now, but the voices against us are still loud and often persuasive. To counteract this continued hatred and bigotry, we have to be bulletproof - not just in our faith, but in our conviction that there is nothing abnormal or sinful in being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

In *Bulletproof Faith*, I offer a blueprint for becoming bulletproof - able to deflect the bullets fired from loaded Bibles or the biased missives of misguided, and often professionally discredited, psychologists.

Thank you for buying this book. I hope that it, along with this study guide, will help you on your journey to becoming bulletproof.

## 2

## Five Steps to a Successful Book Group

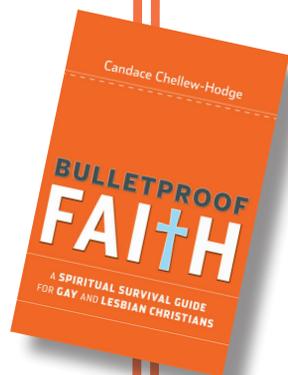
You may use this study guide for private study if you wish, but you'll get more out of this book if you come together with others to discuss the ideas and suggestions made in *Bulletproof Faith*. When you start a book group, there are some things you'll need to think about and some actions you'll need to take up front before your first meeting. Here are some suggestions:

**1. Sweat the small stuff.** Find the best location for your book group - a church, a coffee shop, a bookstore or someone's home. The location should be easy to find and as centrally located as possible for ease of attendance. You may even consider serving a light meal if the group isn't being held at a business that serves food. Breaking bread together helps you to bond with one another and helps to break the ice. You can consider a potluck or take up donations for future meals.

Decide how many sessions to hold and what dates and times are best. You may want to meet weekly, biweekly or once a month, depending on the group. Sessions can go for an hour or even 90 minutes to allow for more discussion time. (If a meal is being served, 90 minutes would be ideal.) We've laid out a schedule for sessions, but feel free to do what's best for your group.

**2. Tell others.** One is indeed the loneliest number when you're forming a book group. To make sure your group grows, you'll need to let others know about it. There are plenty of free ways to publicize your group. Write up a short announcement including dates, times and meeting locations. Contact local churches, schools or community groups and ask them to put the announcement in their newsletters or bulletins or send the information to their email lists. You can also ask the local library or other community gathering places if they will post your announcement. Send emails to your friends and ask them to pass on the information. If you're taking part in bulletin boards, online communities, or have a Facebook or MySpace page, post the information there to attract potential group members.

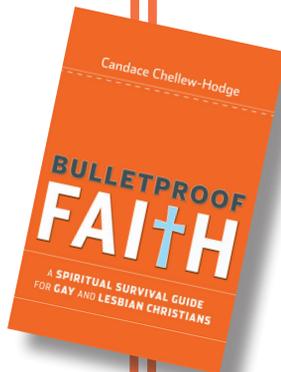
**3. Get ready!** Preparation by both the group leader and participants is critical. It is important that everyone read the assigned chapters before each meeting so everyone is prepared for a great discussion. The provided questions are merely jumping off points for your group.



You may use one of them, all of them, or rephrase them in any way that you like. The important point is that the group is open to each other, gentle with one another's point of view, and committed to embarking on a journey to a bulletproof faith together. Some of the sessions include a "spiritual survival exercise" that you'll want to dedicate some time to experiencing. If you don't have time in the group to do the exercise, please ask participants to do the exercise beforehand and be ready to tell the group about their experience. These exercises are an important step in our journey toward a bulletproof faith.

**4. Talk about it.** The point of a book discussion is to learn and grow, not just individually, but as a group. That requires that the group be properly prepared to interact with one another. As a group leader, you'll need to moderate the discussion and encourage participation from all group members, not just a vocal few. You'll need to keep the group on topic and be prepared to handle disagreements within the group. It's not unusual for group members to disagree, but setting up rules beforehand - like using "I" statements and not judging what others are saying - is important to facilitate a good learning experience for everyone. The focus of this book is the search for common ground and this should be emphasized in your group. Don't worry if you're not an expert on this material. Your role is to facilitate a conversation - not to provide all the answers. Most of the questions you'll be asking don't have any set "right" or "wrong" answers. Enjoying each other, enjoying the mystery of God and enjoying the journey to a bulletproof faith should be the group's goal.

**5. Do something about it.** A bulletproof faith is not all that useful if you spend all your time either alone or in a community that agrees with you and supports you. After reading this book, I hope you'll want to begin to reach out to those around you who may not agree with your views. I'm not asking you to challenge anyone to a fight. Instead, look for ways to begin dialogue. You may want to approach your church and ask them to host an ecumenical or interfaith dialogue with other churches. A local gay and lesbian group, or the gay and lesbian student group at a nearby college, may be interested in holding a town hall meeting on religion and homosexuality. You may want to repeat this book study and invite members or pastors of other congregations that may not be so gay-friendly to join you. Do anything you can to start the conversation and keep it going!

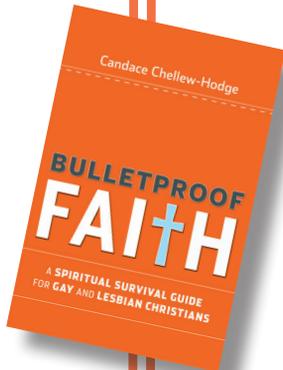


## 3

## Session One: Introduction and Chapter 1

### Introduction: There is no Other Side

1. Because the vigil outside the auditorium in Columbia, S.C. was a silent vigil, no one addressed the yelling woman directly. If you were able to respond to her, what would you say? What feelings do the woman's words stir in you?
2. In the introduction, it is asserted that religious arguments against homosexuality are not truly the "other side" of the homosexuality issue. The media has made it so, giving a platform to religious objections to gay and lesbian rights within church and society. Do you agree or disagree? Why would it not be the other side of the issue? Why could it be considered the other side of the issue?
3. The introduction states, "The question of morality intersects with sexual orientation only in consideration of how we use our sexuality." Do you agree that the scriptures can be a valid guide to morality for all sexual orientations? Why or why not? If not, what guidance can we find for using sexuality responsibly? What does it mean to you to be sexually responsible?
4. Chellew-Hodge believes we must become "bulletproof" - impervious to the attacks of those who disagree with homosexuality based on religious beliefs. What kind of attacks have you suffered because of your sexual orientation, or your support of gay or lesbian people? Do you feel vulnerable to these attacks, unable to find a way to respond or defend yourself? What would it mean to you to become "bulletproof"?



## Chapter 1: Becoming Bulletproof

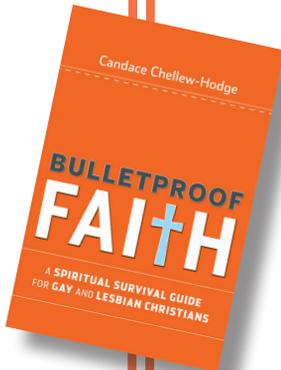
1. Reread the hate mail message on pages 5-6. Read the email slowly and let the words of hatred sink in. Get a piece of paper and reply to the email. Feel deeply the pain those words intend to inflict. Answer this email from that place of pain - that place of injury. Save your response. We'll come back to it later in our study.

2. 1 Peter 3:15b-16a (NRSV) tells us, "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence." Think about that hate mail, or some of the hateful words you have heard as a gay or lesbian Christian, or a supporter of gay and lesbian Christians. How do you feel about the Bible's requirement to offer a gentle and reverent response to such hateful words? Are you able to give such a response now? What would have to happen for you to give a "gentle and reverent response" always - no matter how hurtful the words used against you, or those you love, may be?

3. Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard wrote "Certainly no violent assaulter can murder an immortal spirit. Spiritually, suicide is the only possible death." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

4. In seminary, Chellew-Hodge, like the Karate Kid, learns that we train ourselves in biblical knowledge - not so we can win theological arguments with those who oppose homosexuality because of religious beliefs - but so we don't have to answer such critics. What does it mean to settle the argument about homosexuality in ourselves, once and for all? What would it take for you to have that kind of peace of mind and heart?

5. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on page 10. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?



## 4

## Session Two: Chapter 2 & Spiritual Exercise

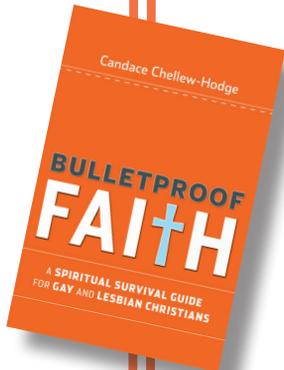
### Chapter 2: Losing Our Religion

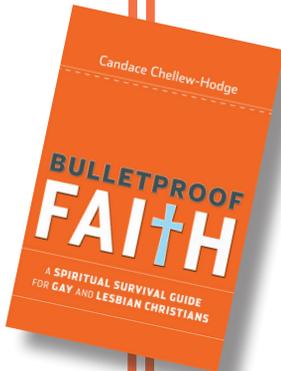
1. Episcopalian priest Hazel Glover tells Chellew-Hodge, “God created us because God thought we might enjoy it.” Chellew-Hodge also advises us to give up anything in our lives that makes us cry. Do you believe God created us to enjoy life and that misery is a clue that we’ve wandered away from God’s will for our lives? Why or why not?

2. We are commanded in Mark 8:34 to “deny ourselves” so that we can be followers of Christ. Some conservative Christians believe this means GLBT people must deny their sexual orientation. Chellew-Hodge believes what we are to deny is our self-absorption that prevents us from loving our neighbor as ourselves. Do you agree with this belief? Why or why not? What do you believe Jesus meant when he told us to “deny ourselves” and follow him?

3. Martin Luther believed he was a “stinking bag of worms” before God - an image that GLBT Christians can understand since we’re constantly told that God rejects us. John Eldredge says we are endowed with a unique “glory” - made and loved by God. How do you feel about your relationship with God - are you a “stinking bag of worms” or a glory-filled child of God? Where do these feelings come from - family, friends, the church, society? Explore the origins of these feelings.

4. Author John Eldridge warns us not to make “agreements” with the enemy of our hearts - that enemy that tells us we are less than or despised by God. What agreements have you made with the enemy about yourself? What is the origin of these agreements?





5. Chellew-Hodge asserts that we are all diamonds, possessing brilliance and fire. To reveal that glory we must “break agreements that tell us we are worthless and will always remain that way” (p. 19). We do this by watching our language - practicing right speech in prayer and in our conversations with ourselves and others - and by walking in integrity - living into who we are and how we have been created as GLBT people. What kind of speech are you using in prayer and conversations with yourself and others? Do you degrade yourself and others? Do you speak words of encouragement? Why or why not? Do you live your life honestly and openly no matter what the cost? Why or why not?

6. Just as Buffy the Vampire Slayer can't fully live into her calling without community, so we are called to live in community - despite the challenges. How can community help us to become the diamonds that God has created us to be? What challenges have you discovered in community? How have you sought to overcome those challenges?

7. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on pages 26-27. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?

## **Spiritual Survival Exercise: Reclaiming your Authentic Self**

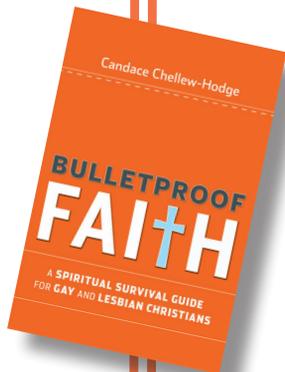
Read through the Spiritual Survival Exercise on pages 28-32 and do it together. Discuss what comes up for you and share with each other the prayer that prays you. Are you surprised by what came up? Why or why not? How can this new prayer help you reclaim your authentic self?

## 5

## Session Three: Chapter 3

### Chapter 3: Learning to Love the Questions

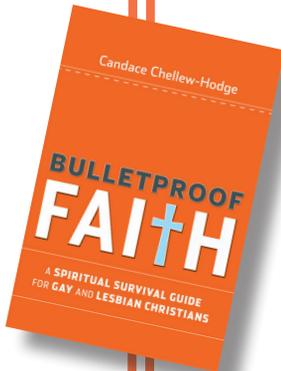
1. A seminary professor told Chellew-Hodge, “If you read the Bible and come away with more answers than questions, you haven’t understood the Bible.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Chellew-Hodge says that anyone who takes the Bible seriously could never take it literally. Do you agree? Why or why not? How were you taught to read the Bible? Has your method of reading the Bible changed over the years? If so, how? What prompted the change?
3. Learning about the history of the Bible and the church almost shipwrecked Chellew-Hodge’s faith. What has challenged your faith in the past? What did you do to overcome those challenges?
4. Accepting GLBT Christians fully into the life of the church poses a serious question of biblical authority to more fundamentalist believers. Many believe that the Bible will be diminished if “go against” what they believe it says about homosexuality. Chellew-Hodge points out that “we have disregarded many things the Bible speaks approvingly of, including polygamy, subjugation of women, division of the races, and slavery” without compromising the overall authority of the Bible. Are these fair comparisons to homosexuality? Would it damage the Bible’s ultimate authority to accept GLBT people in the full life of the church and society? Why or why not?
5. Chellew-Hodge writes, “If God cannot say new things, then God is as dead as the trees on which the words of the Bible are written.” What does it mean for God to say or do a new thing? How can we discern when God is moving in new ways, instead of projecting our own wishful thinking onto God?
6. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on page 46. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?



## 6

## Session Four: Chapter 4 & Spiritual Exercise

### Chapter 4: Wisdom Before Weapons

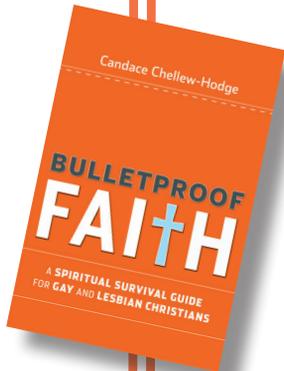


1. When we're attacked for any aspect of our faith, our first reaction is often to defend ourselves - to try and prove why our beliefs are right. Chellew-Hodge quotes Marianne Williamson who asks, "Do you prefer the right or happy?" Would it be difficult for you to put that advice into practice? Why or why not? Why do we need our beliefs validated by those who disagree with us?
2. Xena, the Warrior Princess, advises her gentle sidekick Gabrielle not to fight back against anyone who attacks, but instead to either begin a dialogue or run away from the fight. Which option would you choose? Why? Do you believe it is okay to walk (or run) away from an argument? How does that option make you feel?
3. GLBT people who have been told that God does not love them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity may suffer from low self-esteem. Chellew-Hodge asserts that if we are to have healthy self-esteem we must trust our own experiences of God instead of placing our trust in what others say about God. Do you agree? Why or why not? When have you gone against what others have said about God because of your own experience of God?
4. Anger and fear can often be our biggest obstacles to developing a bulletproof faith. What are the issues surrounding GLBT people and their faith journey that bring up feelings of anger or fear for you? Share your thoughts with the group and explore them together.
5. Chellew-Hodge asserts that we are to embody "agape" love to everyone, including our enemies. What are the challenges we face when we try to love our enemies in this way? How can we overcome them? What does it mean to "will" ourselves to love even those who do not love us?
6. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on page 65. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?

## **Spiritual Survival Exercise: Surrender Before Battle**

Read through the Spiritual Survival Exercise on pages 66-69 and do it together. What came up for you during the meditation? What kind of feelings emerged? How did it feel to surrender your fear, anger or any other emotions that have held you in bondage?

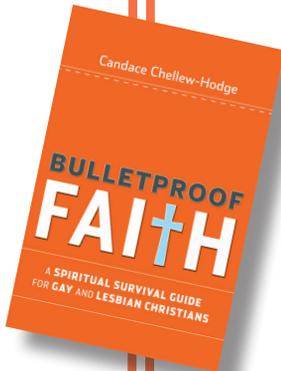
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## Session Five: Chapter 5

### Chapter 5: Learning the Outward Moves



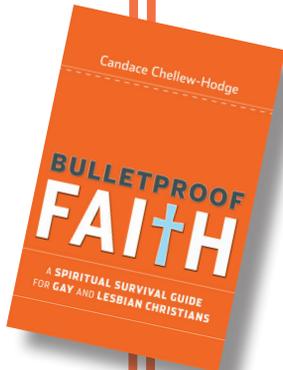
1. When we are drawn into discussions about GLBT people and faith, it is important to learn how to discern between real dialogue and pointless argument. Chellew-Hodge advises us to not argue, instead to use simple statements like, “I don’t agree,” and to avoid “proof texting” wars where Bible verses are swapped in a tit-for-tat fashion. Do you agree? Why or why not? Have you encountered real dialogue on this issue or mere argumentation? What is the difference?
2. Think of a time when you have had an argument - not necessarily over the issue of religion and homosexuality, but it could be. What buttons got pushed for you? Where did your anger or your need to be right come from? Did you use the argument to help you examine “your stuff” and remove those buttons? Why or why not?
3. Chellew-Hodge argues that a big problem for anyone arguing over religion and homosexuality is taking things personally. Both Chellew-Hodge and writer Philip Gulley experience moments in confrontations when they stop taking the argument personally and begin to feel real compassion for the person arguing with them. Have you ever felt that way? If not, can you imagine feeling that way? Take a moment and try to step outside yourself in an argument and begin to wonder where the pain of your attacker may be coming from.
4. Chellew-Hodge outlines several warning signs for when you are getting engaged in pointless arguments. If you become frustrated or angry, become defensive, feel the need to win the argument at all costs or stop using gentle and reverent words, you may be headed for trouble. Have you ever felt this way during an argument? What did you do? What could you do differently in the future? How could Chellew-Hodge have better handled the argument with her brother-in-law?
5. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on page 86. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?

## 8

## Session Six: Chapter 6 & Spiritual Exercise

### Chapter 6: The Gift of the Enemy

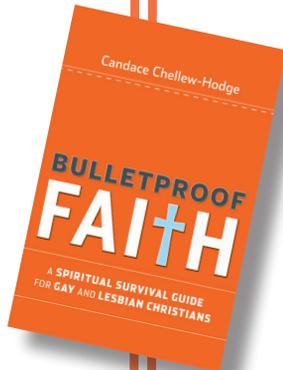
1. Chelley-Hodge writes: “Instead of regarding our attackers as enemies to be defeated, those of us with a bulletproof faith see an attack as an opportunity to improve ourselves and grow stronger and more resilient.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Think of someone who has challenged you or angered you, whether it’s over the issue of GLBT people and religion or another subject. What lessons did you learn from your opponent? Are you grateful for those lessons?
3. Chelley-Hodge quotes author Stephen Pressfield who says we should treat our opponents with respect but “without mercy.” What does it mean to you to respect your enemies but contend with them “without mercy”?
4. Chelley-Hodge’s brother-in-law makes a statement many of us may have heard before: both we and our opponents cannot be right about GLBT people and Christianity. Chelley-Hodge says contradictions are nothing to fear because we can’t see the big picture - only God knows how everything fits. It is our faith that helps us live in the contradictions. How do you handle conflicting arguments around GLBT people and Christianity? Can you live in the contradictions? Why or why not?
5. Chelley-Hodge asserts that our experience of God trumps other areas of theology like Scripture, tradition and reason. Do you agree or disagree? Why? When have you followed your personal experience of God in contradiction to Scripture, tradition or reason? Why did experience win out?
6. Mel White told Chelley-Hodge that fundamentalist Christians are anti-gay because the male-led structure of God’s created world falls apart if a man “quits acting like a man and doesn’t take the man’s responsibility - that’s what they call gays.”



Because of this belief, anti-gay Christians are seeking to either change or eliminate gays and lesbians. Do you agree with White? Why or why not? Do you feel the threat against the GLBT community is real and dangerous? Why or why not?

7. While White believes the threat against the GLBT community from anti-gay Christian leaders is real, Eric Elnes had a very different experience when he met conservative Christians on his CrossWalk America journey. How can you reconcile the two experiences? What can we do to counter the very real threat against us by some segments of Christianity while working to reconcile with other segments that are less outspoken against GLBT people?

8. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on pages 113-115. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?



### **Spiritual Survival Exercise: Breathing Into Our Pain**

Read through the Spiritual Survival Exercise on pages 116-121 and do it together. What came up for you during the meditation? What kind of feelings emerged? Were you able to feel calm and send loving thoughts in the midst of the attack? Why or why not?

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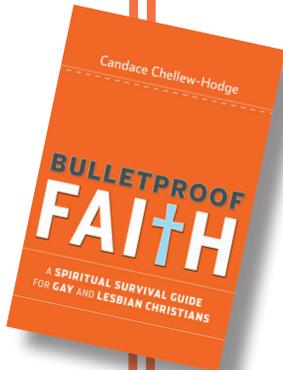
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## 9

## Session Seven: Chapter 7

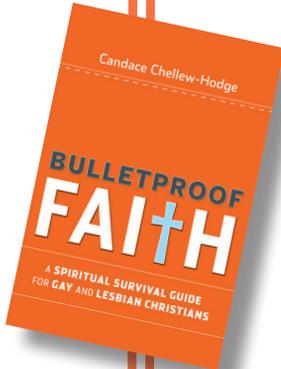
### Chapter 7: The Only Thing That Counts

1. Paul, in Galatians 5:6 writes: “The only thing that counts is faith working through love.” What does that mean to you? Is this really “the only thing that counts”? What does that mean for our faith as GLBT Christians or allies if this is true?
2. Chellew-Hodge believes that GLBT people are faith are one of a long line of people who have been excluded from Christian fellowship over the centuries – modern day “Gentiles,” so to speak. Do you agree with her analysis that, like the Gentiles, God means to include the outcasts of all generations, including GLBT people? If not, why not? If so, how can GLBT Christians work for full inclusion within the church?
3. In Romans 11:29, Paul asserts that “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.” What gifts and calls can GLBT people bring to the church? How would the church be poorer if GLBT people are excluded?
4. Chellew-Hodge writes on page 127: “Instead of judging one another for how we behave or what we eat, Paul advised that we ‘pursue what makes for peace or for mutual upbuilding’ (Romans 14:19). What can GLBT Christians do to “pursue what makes for peace” with those who oppose GLBT inclusion in church and society?
5. Chellew-Hodge outlines some of the characteristics of “faith working through love” on page 131, including inclusion, patience, kindness and seeking the common good. Look over these characteristics. What strikes you about that list? How can it help you to identify when faith (yours or someone else’s) is no longer working through love?



6. On page 132, Chellew-Hodge recounts her feelings upon learning of the death of Rev. Jerry Falwell – a staunch opponent of including GLBT people in both church and society. Recount your own feelings on Falwell’s passing. Can you find a place of compassion for Falwell despite his zealous persecution of the GLBT community?
7. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on pages 132-133. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?

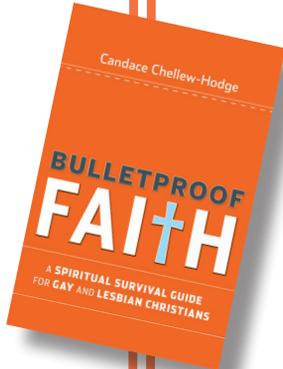
**Use the space below to record your thoughts:**



## 10

## Session Eight: Chapter 8

### Chapter 8: You Know Your Faith is Bulletproof When ...



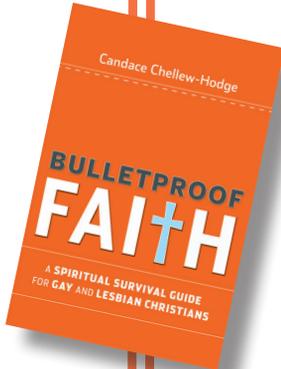
1. Chellew-Hodge asserts that doubt is the greatest gift that God has given to GLBT people because it forces them to fully examine their faith. “A bulletproof faith embraces the doubt,” she writes. What kind of doubts have you struggled with? What doubts remain? Do you see these doubts as a gift or a curse? Why? How can you embrace your doubt and use it to become bulletproof?
2. According to Chellew-Hodge, a bulletproof faith seeks to serve others, even those who oppose us. How can we put that assertion into practice? How can we begin to serve even those who would rather we not exist at all? What does that service look like?
3. Chellew-Hodge believes a bulletproof faith is constantly “grateful for everything in life, the good, the bad and the ugly.” How does being grateful makes our faith bulletproof?
4. Elke Kennedy’s son was killed outside a Greenville, South Carolina bar by a man prejudiced against GLBT people. Chellew-Hodge, in a speech at memorial for Sean Kennedy, pleads with people to forgive his killer - even though Mrs. Kennedy said she wasn’t at that point yet. How does being forgiving, even toward those who would kill us, make our faith bulletproof? Would you be able to forgive in these circumstances? Why or why not?
5. Look over the other characteristics of a bulletproof faith on pages 140-149. Which ones speak to you? Which ones will be difficult for you? Why? Do you agree these things make up a bulletproof faith? Are there other characteristics you would add or subtract?
6. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on pages 149-150. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?

## 11

## Session Nine: Chapter 9 & Spiritual Exercise

### Chapter 9: “No Weapon Shall Prosper”

1. Chellew-Hodge believes GLBT people are “in exile” but will one day “be established in righteousness” - accepted in both church and society. Do you share this optimism? Why or why not?
2. A member of Chellew-Hodge’s church took comfort in the words of Nehemiah that God would not forget the hateful words of his opponents. Does it give you comfort to know that God will not forget the hateful words that have been said to us and against us as GLBT people or allies of GLBT people? Why or why not?
3. Like Nehemiah, our critics ridicule us and tell lies about us, but Nehemiah overcame his enemies with two weapons: prayer and self defense. How can we use Nehemiah’s example to develop our own bulletproof faith? What about Nehemiah’s story gives you the most hope?
4. Review the Spiritual Survival Tips at the end of the chapter on pages 156-157. Discuss each one. Which ones mean the most to you? Which ones do you find impossible to fulfill at this moment? How can you begin to put them into practice?



### Spiritual Survival Exercise: Is That Your Final Answer?

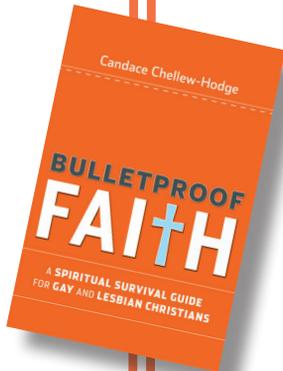
Read through the Spiritual Survival Exercise on pages 158-160 and do it together. How is your response to the hate mail different? What changed? What hasn't changed? How do you feel rereading the email after reading and studying this book? Is it different from how you felt at the beginning of the book? Why or why not?

# 12

## Closing Questions

As you finish *Bulletproof Faith*, take time to reflect on these questions and use the space provided to record your answers:

Has reading and studying this book changed how you feel about those who oppose GLBT inclusion in church and society? Why or why not?



What did you like most about this book?

What did you like the least?

What does it mean to you now to have a “bulletproof faith”?

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- \* *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* by L. William Countryman
- \* *Gifted by Otherness: Gay and Lesbian Christians In the Church* by L. William Countryman, M.R. Ritley
- \* *Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality* by Marvin M. Ellison
- \* *The Bible and Homosexuality* by Michael England
- \* *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart* by Peter Gomes
- \* *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* by Daniel Helminiak
- \* *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* by Carter Heyward
- \* *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* by Tom Horner
- \* *Gays Under Grace* by Maury Johnston
- \* *The Ethics of Sex* by Mark D. Jordan
- \* *The Invention of Sodomy* by Mark D. Jordan
- \* *The Invention of Heterosexuality* by Jonathan Katz
- \* *The Church and the Homosexual* by John J. McNeill
- \* *Taking a Chance on God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians, and Their Lovers, Families, and Friends* by John J. McNeill
- \* *The Children Are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-sex Relationships* by Jeff Miner, John Tyler Connoley
- \* *Scared Straight: Why It's So Hard to Accept Gay People and Why It's So Hard to Be Human* by Dr. Robert Minor
- \* *When Religion is an Addiction* by Dr. Robert Minor
- \* *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* by James B. Nelson
- \* *Sex and the Church* by Kathy Rudy
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- \* *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* by Jeffrey S. Siker (Editor)
- \* *Steps to Recovery from Bible Abuse* by Rembert Truluck
- \* *The Christian Agnostic* by Leslie Weatherhead
- \* *Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America* by Mel White

## Web Sites

### Meditation sites:

<http://www.wccm.org/>  
The World Community for Christian  
Meditation

<http://christianmeditation.com/>  
Christian Meditation

[http://www.meditationcenter.com/  
connect/mind.html](http://www.meditationcenter.com/connect/mind.html)  
Mindfulness Meditation

[http://www.contemplativemind.org/  
practices/loving-kindness.html](http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/loving-kindness.html)  
Loving-Kindness Meditation

[http://www.contemplativemind.org/  
practices/prayer.html](http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/prayer.html)  
Centering Prayer

### Bible and Homosexuality:

<http://www.whosoever.org/bible>  
Whosoever Magazine's section on the  
Bible and homosexuality

[http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom\\_  
bibl.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_bibl.htm)  
Religious Tolerance.org site (very  
comprehensive, gives both sides)

[http://www.bridges-across.org/ba/wink.  
htm](http://www.bridges-across.org/ba/wink.htm)  
Homosexuality and the Bible, by Walter  
Wink

[http://www.postfun.com/pfp/  
homosexual.html](http://www.postfun.com/pfp/homosexual.html)

The Christian Bible and the Homosexual,  
by Dean Worbois

[http://www.mcccchurch.org/HandBible/  
HandBible.htm](http://www.mcccchurch.org/HandBible/HandBible.htm)

Homosexuality and the Bible ... Bad  
News or Good News?

[http://www.cathedralofhope.com/  
homosexuality/](http://www.cathedralofhope.com/homosexuality/)

Homosexuality and Christianity from the  
Cathedral of Hope

[http://www.geocities.com/~mcc\\_st\\_louis/  
homo.htm](http://www.geocities.com/~mcc_st_louis/homo.htm)

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Practice of Safe Texts, By Rev. Dr. Robert  
E. Goss

[http://www.soulforce.org/  
whatthebiblesays.pdf](http://www.soulforce.org/whatthebiblesays.pdf)

What the Bible says and doesn't say about  
homosexuality, By Rev. Mel White

<http://www.jeramyt.org/gay.html>  
Homosexuality and Christianity by  
Jeremy Townsley

[http://www.godmademegay.com/Letter.  
htm](http://www.godmademegay.com/Letter.htm)

A Letter to Louise, By Bruce Lowe

<http://www.truthsetsfree.net>  
Justin Cannon's excellent exegesis

Thank you for purchasing ***Bulletproof Faith: A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians***

Keep up with Candace Chellew-Hodge by visiting the official Web site for the book:

***<http://www.bulletproofbook.com>***

Candace Chellew-Hodge will be hosting a study group for this book. Please check the Web site for dates and times and join us for a lively and enlightening discussion of each chapter. While you're at the Web site sign up for the Bulletproof Faith mailing list and get updates on the book and Candace's schedule. You'll also be able to see video and hear audio of appearances by Candace.

To invite Candace to do a workshop, book signing or other presentation, contact Candace by email at [candace@bulletproofbook.com](mailto:candace@bulletproofbook.com)

We would love to hear from you!  
Please tell us your thoughts about *Bulletproof Faith*.  
Email your feedback to [candace@bulletproofbook.com](mailto:candace@bulletproofbook.com)

